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AN OPEN LETTER.

O, writers realistic!
Won't you, just to please a friend,
Be not so pessimistic
In the way your stories end?
And can't you now and then contrive
To let the lovers wed,
Nor have the heroine arrive
To find the hero dead?

The fair appearing things of life
Are not forever bad;
And even in this vale of strife
Are moments that are glad.
O' can't you to your word of doubt
Admit a little flash
Of sunshine now and then, without
Its going all to smash?

Quit blasting every happy bud;
Quit clouding every hour.
Quit smearing all our gods with mud,
Quit making sweet things sour!
We're tired of repiners who
Embitter every cup.
Ring off! ye bilious whiners, do
For pity's sake let up!
—Free Press.

OUT OF BOHEMIA.

Elsa came in with flushed cheeks and brilliant eyes.

Laura, bending over a spirit lamp on the littered table, glanced up from her brewing.

"I waited awhile for you, but as you did not come——" she observed. lifting the small copper kettle from the slender blue flame.

"Why did you wait one moment?" cried Elsa.

She lingered somewhat over the simple operations of removing her gloves and putting up the books she brought in. She presently gathered herself together with an effort.

"Did you get any lunch for yourself?"

Laura was calmly sipping her tea.

"No."

"No? Laura, how could you? To work all day at those illustrations without eating! Do you mean to say you have had nothing at all since breakfast?"

Laura, instead of replying, cast a circular glance about the room.

"What became of the buns? We had some buns left, had we not?"

Elsa went to an ancient and somehow picturesque chest of drawers, and from under an improvised drapery of half a yard of old brocade brought out a paper bag.

Their eyes met, and in a moment both girls had broken into long shrieks of laughter, ending on Elsa's part in a half-strangled sob.

"Oh, Laura, I am afraid I can't stand it much longer! It is so—so degrading."

"Degrading?"

Laura had consumed her bun and was now gathering up the two Japanese cups and saucers.

"Did you lunch to-day?"

"Yes."

Laura nodded.

"With Mr. Varian, I suppose?"

Elsa only made a little additional motion with her pretty head. Then:

"Oh, Laura, you don't think there's any harm in it, do you?" she pleaded.

"Harm?"

"That I should have happened to meet Mr. Varian once or twice and that he has asked me to take lunch with him? You see, it is not as though he were a complete stranger. As long as he knew grandfather a little and knows who I am, too, why—it's different somehow. Don't you think so?"

"In your case—no, I don't think there is any harm—exactly."

"Laura! You say that so curiously! Don't you think Mr. Varian is—is a—an——"

"An honorable man? I hope so," rejoined Laura, coloring in her turn rapidly under her rich dark skin. "In any other case I should advise you to be more careful."

"You're always advising me to be more careful. But I don't know any one more independent or more careless as to what other people may think than yourself," then remarked the younger girl in a tone a trifle aggrieved.

"In my case it is very different,' was the short reply. "I am not pretty. You are."

"There are times when you are very, very handsome, Laura," said Elsa's soft voice with earnest conviction.

But it was not quite half an hour before even up there, where the last rays of the summer twilight lingered gest, Laura was obliged to push the work from her. As she did so, waking from the creative absorption in which she had been lost, a singular sound attracted her, coming from the other side of the room. Getting to her feet she saw that Elsa was sobbing, with her face buried in the demoralized upholstery of the sofa bed.

"What is it?" said Laura very gently and firmly. But already Elsa's face was buried once more, and this time upon the shoulders of Laura's gray stuff dress.

"Nothing, nothing, Laura! But, oh, I feel so—so unhappy and—wretched! I know I'm very, very weak. But it's so dreadful being so poor and living so—so——"

"I warned you, you know, dear," came Laura's quiet voice.

"Oh, I know, I know! You are so brave and strong and talented! But I don't believe I ever shall succeed, and—and——"

There was a little pause, during which Elsa's sobs grew full of dreary despair.

"You must go home, Elsa."

There was a protesting movement of her palpitating little figure.

"Yes. You must go back to your people. You are too tender, too delicate, too sensitive for this sort of life. You know I told you," the girl went on a little wearily, "that making one's own living and striking out independently for one's self was not so easy as it might seem. If a girl have a good home, even though it were so simple a one, she is, perhaps, safest and happiest in its shelter."

"You mean a girl like me," said Elsa, sitting up and nodding her head with dreary sagacity. "You know that nothing would induce you to go back to the sort of life which I should lead on the farm with grandfather and Aunt Polly. But you are different—so different. Some day you will surely succeed, whereas I——"

Laura was silent a moment.

"And Mr. Varian?" she finally said.

She felt the presence of the blush on the other's cheek which she could not see.

"Don't don't! Don't speak of him in—in that way!" breathed Elsa.

* * * * * *

"Come in," called Laura a week later.

The summary invitation had evidently not been heard, for the knock was repeated after a discreet interval.

This time Laura rose, and, pencils in hand, opened the door herself.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Varian," she said gravely. "Come in."

Of the two it was not she who was embarrassed. Laying down her pencils she pushed a chair slightly toward him with the gesture of a queen.

"Mr. Varian," she said, "I have known you but a short time. Practically we are strangers. Yet I think we shall understand each other. I do you the credit of believing that I can speak frankly to you. I asked you to come here to see me for a special reason, which I shall broach at once. You are aware," she concluded, "that Elsa—Miss Hart—has returned to her home and friends?"

"Indeed? I had no idea of it. No."

Laura dropped her eyes for a moment.

"You make it more difficult for me to say what I wished," she observed in a moment. "She has gone back to her friends because she was far too sensitive and delicate a little creature to face the hand-to-mouth, struggling existence of a female art student successfully. She should never have attempted it. I blame myself now, for I love the child dearly. Still, her year of such experience as she has known here would do her no harm, rather good, perhaps, were it not for one thing," and here those gray eyes rested full upon the young man again, "and with that you, Mr. Varian, are connected."

"I?"

The gray eye flashed scornfully.

"It is unworthy to dissemble!" cried Laura. "If you have given that poor child cause to think that you love her, and have taught her to love you in return, there is no reason why you should attempt so to conceal the fact.

"Pardon me, I have been unnecessarily rude and hasty. But I am Elsa's best friend, I think. I know her very thoroughly. Her happiness seems to have become, in some sense, my responsibility since she left the safe shelter of her home to be with me—to try the same life that I have tried. Mr. Varian, I believe Elsa is very unhappy now. And——"

"And you think she is unhappy because I have trifled with her affections? Led her to fix them upon me when——"

"Of course, you are a man of the world, Mr. Varian, and Elsa is a mere little country girl," interrupted Laura, with rapid utterance. Her case somehow, did not seem so very clear after all. And strong and collected as she always was she was growing strangely nervous now.

"But Elsa is a good, pure girl, worthy to be the wife of any man," she hurried on "And——" She paused abruptly.

"I honor you more than I can say for what I have seen of you within the last ten minutes," said Varian's voice at this juncture. "Few women would have had such directness, such loyalty to a friend, such courage. But there is a mistake here. I—I cannot marry Miss Hart."

Laura raised her head. For a moment they measured each other.

"You cannot marry——"

"No Because I do not love her. I have looked upon her as a pretty child—nothing more; and mindful of her grandfather's kindness to me the summer that I was thrown from my horse when riding near his place and laid up under his roof for weeks, I have tried to do what little I could for her. That is all. I sought her out, not for herself, but because she was your friend—because she was near you."

She had turned ashy pale. The pallor of her cheek was reflected on Verian's. He had not thought to speak so soon. Their eyes held each other for a long, breathless pause. In an instant the young man was on his knees at her side.

"Laura! Laura!"

"No, no, no!" She shrank away from his touch; but he had seen the expression of her eyes, and all his pulse beat in the intoxication of a new hope.

"You must go away; you must never come back," she said, hoarsely.

"Laura! You can't mean that?" the poor fellow gasped.

She had risen to her feet.

"Why? Why?" he stammered, following her as she retreated from him. A light burst upon him, induced by something in her face.

"It cannot be that—— You are not thinking of Elsa, of Miss Hart? But this is folly, madness! For a girl like you—head and shoulders above other women—such a stand is incomprehensible!"

"She loved you; she trusted me," said Laura, rigid and white in her effort at selfcontrol.

"Good heaven!" the man exclaimed, driven to bay, "you would not have me marry a girl I do not love simply because she happened to fancy otherwise? I deplore the delusion, but what more can I do? Laura," he pleaded, "you will not send me away?"

"Yes." She still stood rigid, with downcast eyes.

"At least," he pleaded again, after a moment of silence, "will you not tell me that you care for me—a little?"

Not even then would she raise her eyes.

"Very well. I shall go now, but I shall come back. Do you hear me? Time works many changes—and I shall return."

And, so saying, he left her.

* * * * *

But she never hoped for his return. She never expected it.

The last of the warm days had flown, the autumn afternoons were growing short, Laura worked on, leading her own solitary life.

She had resigned herself to the solitude in which she seemed to have been abandoned. Her pencil never faltered in these days. But the hand that wielded it had grown thin and white, and the blue veins showed like delicate tracery under the transparent skin.

She was coming home late one dark afternoon, when, in the gloom-filled landing before her door, she made out an indistinct form. It did not move at her approach, and only when she had thrown open the door did she recognize who it was.

Then she staggered back a little.

"You see, I have come back—as I told you I would," said Varian.

In the stronger light of the room he saw how changed she was and how she trembled.

"Laura—my poor girl!"

Even then she strove to push him from her.

"Good heaven, Laura," he cried, stepping back; "do you not know that Elsa Hart is married?"

"Married!"

He drew a folded paper from his pocket.

"You see, she was married two weeks ago, and to a fellow I happen to know, a clever young artist, rising in his profession, who spent his summer sketching on her grandfather's farm. Now, Laura, will you come to me?"

"Oh, how could she, how could she——"

"Forget me so soon?" laughed Varian. "Pardon me, dearest, but I think you rather overrated the depth of her feelings. She liked me no better than she would have liked many other men who happened to be a little kind or attentive to her. She is a dear, sweet little woman, but"—he broke off impatiently—"why should we talk of her? You have not yet answered a question I once put to you."

"What question?" The girl's eyes would not meet his.

"I asked you once if you cared for me—a little."

Then, indeed, her gray eyes met his with the full glance of the Laura of old.

"I think—I have always cared—from the first—more than a little," she said.—Washington Post.

The Collecting Mania.

A most violent fad is that of collecting—collecting no matter what, so long as a collection is made. Fans, china, gloves, shoes, watches, gems, and so on ad nauseam. I heard a man say the other day to a young woman, "I wish I knew something to collect." "China," suggested madame. And the dear fellow went immediately to work buying china cups and plates and pitchers. One girl I know announced some time ago that she was collecting plates for a harlequin dessert set, and that contributions would be gratefully received. Her friends found it an easy way to pay her a compliment, and at the present time her collection numbers 119. The young woman would fain have stopped long ago, but the word had gone forth and her last condition is worse than her first, and her fate will probably be to lie buried 'neath these bits of china, as did the Indian maid who had betrayed her father's city beneath the gold and jewels the invaders heaped upon her.

Another girl is collecting vinaigrettes. She had seventy-nine at last counting, and is still in it. These are a few of the least hurtful fads. There are others, many of them, not so harmless; and think what might be accomplished if half the time and energy expended on this one fad of collecting were devoted to some even fairly useful purpose! A fad is pretty sure to be not in the best taste. It argues a departure from established form, and usually in matters where custom, necessity, and circumstance have chosen the best method for establishment. The reaction is sure to come, and after the untasteful prodigality, perhaps simplicity will obtain. When we tire of the orchid, perhaps we shall go back to the daisy, and bethink ourselves that, after all, old things are best.—Harper's Bazar.

THE more worthless a man is, the more he likes to sit and spit on a hot stove.

A MAN is only allowed to speak well of women and religion.

TRUMPET CALLS.

Ram's Horn Sounds a Warning Note to the Unredeemed.

SMALL books are read the most.

PRAISE never has to be coaxed.

DON'T try to carry all your religion in your head.

IT is as wicked not to do right as it is to do wrong.

A CHRISTIAN'S working capital is his faith in God.

TRUTH is always willing to be baptized with fire.

THE prayer of faith never stops expecting an answer.

NOBODY can become rich by never giving away anything.

NO MAN treats Christ well who treats his wife like a mule.

WE never love God until we find out that he is a God of love.

PURITY in prison pays better dividends than sin in a palace.

IT is hard to feel at home with people who never make mistakes.

IT takes a fool a lifetime to find out what others see at a glance.

HE who would be strong in mind must have facts for his diet.

THE best workers are those who have learned best how to rest.

THE pleasures of sin have a bright look, but their touch is death.

THE man who never praises his wife deserves to have a poor one.

IT is only a little of the preacher's work that is done in the pulpit.

IT takes contact with others to make us acquainted with ourselves.

WHAT some people call prudence is often what others call meanness.

THE devel shoots hard at the man who makes an honest tax return.

THERE is no investment that pays any better dividends than being good.

GOOD men are hated because their lives tell sinners that they are wrong.

THE devil may drag a Christian sometimes, but he can never drive him.

THE man who is faithfully improving his one talent will soon have ten.

WHENEVER we look at the dust we ought to remember where God found us.

THE sin that is not entirely blotted out will soon cover the whole page again.

THE man who is ruled by his feelings will always travel in a zig-zag course.

WHENEVER a soul is saved God has given another proof that the Bible is true.

NOT many tears are shed when the man dies who has lived only for himself.

THERE is no such thing as getting rich without asking God to tell you how.

THE man who is not afraid of a little sin will soon be in the power of a big one.

THE devil never feels that he is losing ground in the home where there is a moderate drinker.

The Ravages of the Bookworm.

One of the greatest plagues with which the librarian has to deal is a little insect called Auglossa pinguinalis, which deposits its larvæ in books in the autumn. These produce a mite which does a great deal of mischief. Small wood-boring beetles also cause much destruction among the covers and bindings. The best preventive is the use of mineral salts in the binding. Where this has not been done, the book shelves should be sprinkled with powdered alum and pepper, and the books should be rubbed once or twice a year with a piece of cloth that has been steeped in a solution of alum and dried. This will effectually prevent the ravages of the bookworm.

WHEN a boy goes out doors in winter, he leaves the door open, to warm the hill where he intends to slide.

WHO HAS A COPY?

A Book that Cost Little, but is Worth Much.

Among the things not generally known is this fact: There is at the present moment, something like $100,000 worth of a particular kind of book floating around America and nobody knows where the volumes are, nor is it likely that the present possessors are aware of the value of them.

The name of the book is "Alice in Wonderland," and this is how Alice got into Wonderland in the first place:

This most popular imaginative work was written by a mathematician, of all persons on the earth. As everybody knows, his nom de guerre is Lewis Carrol, and as everybody does not know his real name is C. L. Dodgson. Mr. Dodgson is mathematical tutor in Oxford and is, I believe, a Christ Church man. I am told that Mr. Dodgson knows absolutely nothing of Lewis Carrol. The delightful and charming writer Lewis Carol, on the other hand, probably cares very little about the man of figures in Oxford. They are the Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of literature in a way, although of course neither Carrol nor the mathematician are given to the deplorable habits of Mr. Hyde. If you wish to communicate with the author of "Alice in Wonderland" you must write to Mr. Lewis Carrol, care of his London publishers. If you wish to consult an authority on figures, write to Mr. Dodgson at Oxford.

The editor of a big London daily, ignorant of the etiquette in these matters, wrote Mr. Dodgson asking him to contribute to the big London weekly. The editor was much offended at the reply he received. He found that the grave mathematician knew nothing about the frivolous writings of Lewis Carrol.

But all this has no more to do with the books in America than the writer of children's stories has to do with mathematics.

"Alice in Wonderland" was written nearly thirty years ago. The author secured John Tenniel of Punch, as illustrator. The books were printed at Oxford. The Oxford press at that day knew very little about printing wood cuts. When Tenniel saw the book he was wroth and he absolutely refused to have a copy sent out with his name attached to it, because his illustrations had been so badly produced. The Oxford press was evidently not proud of the production, for its name does not appear on the volume. The publishers found themselves with 2,000 copies of a book by an unknown writer on their hands which they dare not circulate in England. At that day anything was thought good enough for America, so the whole 2,000 were dumped in at New York to be sold for what they would bring.

They were sold and are now scattered all over the land. Anyone who has a copy is hereby informed that it is worth $50 to-day on the London market. When the 2,000 books were landed in New York anyone might have bought the package for about the price of the paper and the printing. If he had kept them until to-day he would have made a good thing out of it.

Even the English first edition is valuable. It bears the imprint of Clay of London, and fetches from $25 to $30. Of course "Alice in Wonderland" was largely pirated in the United States. These New York editions, however, are valueless from the book collector's point of view.

Somewhat Eccentric.

Charles Lamb's dear old bookish friend George Dyer, could never be got to say an ill word, even of the vilest miscreant. "Come now, George," said Lamb one day, on teasing intent, "now what do you say of Williams?" (Williams was the Ratcliff Highway murderer, the Jack the Ripper of his day, celebrated in De Quincey's "Murder as a Fine Art.") "Well, Mr. Lamb," replied Dyer, "I must admit he was a somewhat eccentric character."